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FIRST DAY'S SESSION.

THURSDAY, May 7, 1863.

The third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America met on this day, at 11 o'clock, a. m., in the Presbyterian church. The following exercises were then held. The singing of the 36th psalm, first part. The 3d chapter of Ephesians was read. After prayer by Dr. J. A. Lyon, and singing of the 48th psalm, second part, Dr. Kirkpatrick, the moderator of the last Assembly, preached the opening sermon as follows:

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."

EPHESIANS 3:8, 11.

The use which I propose to make of this passage will not require me to enter upon the exegetical difficulties which lie in some of its clauses, nor into the questions in polemic theology which have arisen from the several interpretations which have been given to them.

My views of the proper construction of particular words and phrases will be sufficiently apparent in the progress of my remarks. Permit me, then, without further introduction, to announce in the form of proposition, those truths contained in the passage to which I desire to call your attention.

I. *The scheme of Redemption is a purpose of eternity.* It is not a project of yesterday, nor of any distant age, however far back. It is from eternity, which has no periods, no epochs, no succession of years and months. The imagination cannot travel back to the time when it did not exist.

The apostle here declares the scheme of redemption to be according to the eternal purpose of God which He purposed, or wrought in Christ Jesus our Lord. Elsewhere, and particularly in a former part of this Epistle, he speaks of a people chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, of feet upon whom the infinite blessings of this scheme are to be expended, the subjects in whom its power and grace are to be exemplified. The election of a people for such ends, implies of necessity the prior or at least the contemporaneous

existence of the scheme itself. "Before the foundation of the world" and eternity, are to us equivalent terms.

It matters not whether we hold with some that the purpose of redemption preceded in the Divine mind the purpose of creation, that men were created in order that they might be redeemed, or whether we adopt the milder view that God having determined to create man, and having, for reasons, no doubt holy, wise and benevolent, although we cannot fathom them, determined to permit him to fall from the estate wherein he was created, thereupon devised the plan and means of his recovery comprised in the Gospel. Either view carries back the purpose of redemption beyond the foundation of the world and lodges its inception in the depths of an unmeasured eternity.

II. The second proposition which we derive from the passage before us is: this purpose of God which is embodied in the scheme of human redemption, was not known to any of the creatures of God until it began to be unfolded in Jesus Christ, nor is it yet fully known.

On such a topic it becomes me to speak with great caution. To indulge in speculation here would be idle; it might be also culpable and hurtful. The Scriptures, however, represent the subject as a mystery—something that had not been discovered, something not discoverable, by human, and, we infer from the language which they employ, not by finite capacities. They represent it as "hidden," "hidden in God." The apostle so represents it in the text, "To make all men see what is the fellowship," or, as it is conceded on all hands, the word ought to be, the economy "of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." We know that part from revelation from God, the wisdom of the world know not God, much less the method by which God proposed to reconcile the world unto Himself. We know also, that with the aid of the revelation made in the Scriptures of the old Testament, notwithstanding Jesus Christ by whom the eternal purpose of God was to be executed, had begun His work of redemption and had carried it forward for four thousand years with constantly increasing light and bounty, instructing and sanctifying such eminent examples of knowledge and holiness as Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah and Daniel, the people of God, remained up to the time of the ad-

vent of our Lord in the flesh, and to the close of His three years of incomparable teaching, in great darkness on some, and in total ignorance of others of the prominent, and to us clearest doctrines of human redemption. So simple a truth as it now seems, so simple in itself and so necessary to any just conceptions of the nature and efficacy of the Gospel, so necessary to the glory of the Redeemer's character and works—as that the gentiles should be fellow heirs with the Jews, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel, such a mystery was it, that the very disciples of our Lord, the apostles whom Himself ordained, learned it only under the stress of miracles, and attesting displays of the Holy Spirit not less overwhelming than the evidence of miracles. It required the gifts and zeal of a Paul, the special minister to the Gentiles, to convince them of it, with all the inducements predisposing them thereto. The Jews were not convinced nor are they yet.

But this purpose of God was hidden from the angels also; perhaps not to the extent to which it was inscrutable to the inquiries of man. Their more exalted powers of intellect, unimpaired by sin, and operating in a region of purer light; their more intimate communion with God and ampler opportunities of studying the works of His hands and the course of His providence, enabled, them doubtless, to penetrate to a depth never reached by one of our race, into the wonders of the Divine wisdom and goodness. It may be also that God made to them revelations concerning His secret purposes, not bestowed upon less faithful and less favored subjects of His government. Notwithstanding these things, the allusions of the Scriptures to the subject, although not frequent, are so distinct as to preclude all doubt that there are features of the scheme of redemption, principles underlying it, laws characterizing its operations, facts evolved in its progress, which the angels have never fully comprehended, and which, as one and another, even to this day, may be brought more conspicuously to their view fill them with astonishment no less than with delight. It was in relation to some of those features—nor would they appear to have been the most difficult of apprehension, the apostle exclaimed, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" Language that cannot be made to exclude any order of finite beings, without so impairing its force as to defeat the design of its use. Nor would it seem to be the most intricate of the many problems involved in the scheme of redemption which the apostle Peter finds occasion to represent the angels as bending from their height in knowledge and glory with intense desire to look into.

III. Our third proposition is, the primary design of the scheme of redemption is to show forth the glory of God. Of course, His declarative glory is here meant, that which is evinced in the display of His perfections to the view of His intelligent creatures, and in the augmented revenue of adoration and praise, love and obedience accruing to Him from the discovery.

I know not what the truth is which the Sacred

Scriptures more clearly teach than that the Lord hath made all things, and upholds and governs them, for His own glory, and I see not what end He could propose in His counsels and works, that should be at once so worthy of Himself and so beneficent toward His creatures. The happiness of the universe is an exalted end, whether in the design of God or in the efforts of His creatures; but what would that happiness be without the glory of the Creator, independently of that glory, or not in subordination to it? Could it be even if it were right or possible, that anything should have the precedence of the Maker and life of all things? Shall there be a throne higher than the throne of God?

The purpose which stands foremost in other works of God's hands and other appointments of His providence, we shall not find displaced in the scheme of redemption, that product of the Divine mind, so profound in its conception and the method of its execution that it remains a study and a mystery withal, to the principalities and powers heaven. "Hallowed be Thy name," is the first petition our Saviour has taught us to urge at the throne of grace. Father glorify thy name, was His own last petition in the hour of his soul's final conflict with the Prince of this world, when having achieved a victory over the infirmities of the flesh as well as the temptations of the enemy, He declared Himself ready for the slaughter on Calvary, and for ignominy and pain a thousand fold greater, if such might be the Father's will.

"To the praise of His glory" is the apostle's designation of the end which from the beginning of the world, God had in view in that dispensation by which, in the fullness of time, He will gather together in one, "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth." And in the passage before us, the apostle declares the intent of his being called of God to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men both Jews and Gentiles, in the economy of the mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, was to make known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God.

To represent the salvation of mankind—the salvation of any number or of the greatest number—as the primary, or yet the ultimate design of the scheme of redemption, is to give too great a prominence to the human aspect of this matchless product of the divine wisdom and grace.

Immeasurably high as this end is, there is one that rises above it. God's glory is of more value to the universe of His creatures than the deliverance from death and exaltation to Heaven of myriads more than the human family will ever number. It is as the means to that more important end, that the salvation of man becomes a work worthy of the labour and sacrifice of the Son of God, and a subject of eager inquiry and ceaseless solicitude to the angels.

IV. Our fourth proposition is: In the eternal purpose of God, the Church of Christ is constituted the agent for making known to the heavenly world the manifold wisdom of God comprehended in the scheme of redemption.

The Apostle speaks of a special grace—that of the Apostleship—given unto him who, having once been a persecutor, in his own estimation was the least of all saints, that he should preach the

unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles chiefly, and to others as he might have opportunity, so that he might enlighten all men in the knowledge of the mystery or scheme of redemption, which from the beginning of the world had been hidden in God, the creator of all things; to the intent, or in order that, *now*, after so long a period of darkness, might be known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, *by the Church*, the manifold wisdom of God; and further, declares this office assigned to the Church is not something merely incidental, nor a thing not originally contemplated, but presenting itself as an after-thought; for, he adds, it is according to God's eternal purpose, which He made or wrought in Christ Jesus our Lord. The inquiry is often for the origin of the Church. Here it is: In the eternal purpose of God, co-existent with the inception of the scheme of redemption, and as a part, (and it would be presumption in us to say that it is not an essential part) of the plan of the Divine grace, which embraced the incarnation, doctrines, labours, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Jesus Christ. Did that plan include also the transmission of the knowledge of these truths concerning Christ Jesus and the blessings of His salvation, from one to another of the successive generations of mankind, and their extension from the spot where they were first proclaimed to the ends of the earth, it included the Church as the instrument by which the glorious end is to be accomplished. Did it embrace the augmentation of God's declarative glory by unfolding in its progress new wonders of the divine perfections, to the eager gaze of the principalities and powers near His throne, as well as to His rational creatures on the earth, and, for aught we know to the contrary, to all other orders of intelligent beings? It embraced, also, and ordained the Church as the medium through which those discoveries are to be made that astonish, instruct, and delight the beholder, in whatever part of His dominions. Looking at the Church in the most favoured condition in which it has ever existed upon the earth; viewing it even in the yet unrealized condition in which it is portrayed in the promises of the blessed word; does it not seem a thing incredible to us that such an office should have been assigned to such an agent? Our apostle, however, is wont to write things hard to be believed, as well as those hard to understand, nor is he wont to apologize for so doing. It is a mystery that the Church should be Christ's body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. It is a great mystery, that union between Christ and the Church so close and indissoluble, approaching so near an identity, that they of the Church are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The method and means by which the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the angels, may be no less a mystery to them than the truths which are thus discovered. They are all constituent parts of the economy of the mystery which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things; they are all embodied in the eternal purpose of God, wrought out in Jesus Christ our Lord; they all conspire together to the praise of the glory of God's name.

The wisdom of God is "manifold." It has not yet been all manifested. The angels have not

ceased to inquire and to learn. The work of the Church in its relations to them is, therefore, not completed; nor will it be until the last sinner upon the earth shall have been converted unto Jesus Christ, and the last saint shall have been made meet for companionship with the angels in glory. Nay, may we not go further and say, its work will not be fully accomplished and its office vacated, when, its ranks having been filled up, it shall be all a glorious Church, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, and fit for its destiny as the wife of Lamb, it shall enter upon its eternal life and state of blessedness; for in the heavenly places it shall still sustain a peculiar relation to its great Head; will still be distinguished as the body which has been redeemed and washed and sanctified by the blood of the cross; will still exemplify and illustrate the power of divine grace; will still receive the benefactions of the divine love; and thus still make known to the principalities and powers there more and more of the manifold wisdom of God?

That wisdom lies hidden in the Gospel, and that Gospel, as employed in rearing, educating, sanctifying the Church, and as ministered by the Church, displays the wisdom in its unlimited resources, its manifold aspects. In each of the several dispensations in which the Church has existed; in all the changes through which it has passed; in every form it has assumed; in the alternations, often rapid, and some times violent, of its condition of prosperity, or yet of depression, its decline and extinction in one country, and establishment and speedy extension in another, its trials, persecutions and losses; in the opposition it provokes, the efforts of science, falsely so called, to undermine it, the attempts of civil rulers to crush it; in the heresies that spring up in its own bosom, and in the dissensions that rend its parts asunder; in all these things, and in the means by which it lives in the midst of death, oft grows out of decay, achieves the widest conquests, when its resources seem the most inadequate; through a few ordinances, simple in their form, and in themselves inert, receiving for its own nourishment unending supplies of divine grace, and exerting upon the generations of the earth an influence more potent than was ever wielded by warriors and kings; in such things as these that pertain to the Church as a body, and also in what relates to its members individually; the transformation of a persecuting, injurious, Saul of Tarsus into the praying, laborious, indefatigable Paul, the servant of Jesus; the practical paradox that he who, at last, accounted himself the least of all saints, should yet reckon himself not a whit behind the chief of the apostles, though he was nothing; nor in such extraordinary instances only of the wonder working grace of God, marking the course of the Church, but in the history of every true member thereof from the moment the divine Spirit moved upon his heart, calling him unto repentance, through all his conflicts, doubts, fears, sorrows, hopes, joys, declensions and triumphs, on until the last conflict and the crowning victory; the wisdom of God, infinite in the phases which it assumes, is displayed to the enraptured vision of witnessing angels; and as there is in every condition of the Church as a body, and in every experience of the individual member, something peculiar to itself, some new obstacle overcome, or enemy vanquished, or conquest

made, or degree of holiness attained, for which some special provision in the scheme of redemption has been called into requisition, we can understand now it is the angels are still learning, and shall continue to learn whilst there shall be a Church to teach.

To specify what truths they are thus ever learning through the Church, would imply that we have outstripped them in the pursuit of knowledge. All we can say is in the general terms employed by the apostle. They are truths evincing the manifold wisdom of God; truths themselves hidden in the economy of the mystery which from the beginning has itself been hidden in God who created all things; truths which, as made known by the Church redound, in a special manner to the praise of His glory. Who shall say that there are any truths relating to the character, works and providence of God, which are not rendered more illustrious by the history and the ministry of the Church? But, doubtless, those which may be signalized as forming the subjects of most important inquiry on the part of the heavenly intelligences, are specifically the doctrines which the apostle designates as the unsearchable riches of Christ. His person in which was united the fullness of the Godhead with the infirmities of the flesh; how in Him those elements are made to coalesce, that everywhere else stand as the opposites of each other; impossibilities are achieved; contradictions reconciled; judgment and mercy meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other; the sinner is pardoned whilst the law which condemns him is magnified, the veracity of God pledged for the death of the transgressor, yet triumphantly, gloriously vindicated in his salvation from death; then, as if answering to the union of the Divine and human natures in His one person, the union between Christ and the sinner believing in his name, and how, in accordance with this union, the sinner's guilt is laid upon Him, the sinless one, and His righteousness, all perfect and glorious, becomes a garment of righteousness to the sinner; how, by virtue of that union the Divine Spirit that dwelt in Christ anointing Him to His office and work of redemption, dwells also in the heart of the sinner, assimilating his soul unto the image of Redeemer, and sanctifying him in soul, body and spirit, unto God; how through the same mystical union, he who was born a child of wrath, a child of the evil one, becomes a son of God, an heir to immortal life, a sharer of Christ's throne in His glory, a judge of the world, a judge of angels. To these things and much else equally wonderful, might be added as included in the unsearchable riches of Christ, the plenitude of His grace, the efficacy of His atonement, the constancy of His love, the tenderness of His sympathies, the pulsations of a brother's heart felt in His Almighty arm, and all that at once qualifies Him to let the Saviour of the whole world make of Him each individual believer's own, personal friend, as well as Almighty Saviour.

Such truths regarded simply as facts relating to the person, offices and works of the Lord Jesus Christ, we may suppose the angels to have been long familiar with. But these facts lie on the surface of the subject. Wonderful as they are, incredible as they have ever been to the wise of this world even with a divine revelation to illustrate them and divine authority to enforce

them, they belong to the class of doctrines that constitute as it were the alphabet of the great volume wherein are treasured up the unsearchable riches of Christ.

From the topics which have been under review we may learn something of the dignity of the office which the Church fills. We have seen that the Church was incorporated with the scheme of redemption in the eternal purposes of God, and that with all else embraced in that scheme, it was ordained for the glory of God as its ultimate, its highest end; not merely, however, in the sense that all things were made with that object in view, but in the specific sense in which the economy of the mystery which has from the beginning been hid in God, was devised, an extraordinary, unique contrivance, projected by the Divine mind to display the perfections of the divine character and government in terms or degrees that nothing else had ever done, nor perhaps ought else might ever do. To manifest the glory of God to the humblest of His creatures upon the earth, is an honor and privilege great beyond our conceptions; but the office of the Church is to manifest His glory to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, to those who are the most exalted in position and gifts of all created beings, who stand nearest His throne, bear the closest resemblance to His image, and have made the greatest attainments in the knowledge of His character.

Such is the dignity of the Church in its origin and design. It is well for us to contemplate it in such an aspect, or at least to endeavor to lift our souls up, as far as may be, toward the position in which the truths we have rehearsed, exhibit the Church. So doing, when we come to inquire or to answer the inquiry 'which is the true Church,' or, 'which is the best Church,' we shall not ask, 'which lays the most valid claim to the longest history or the most richly traced succession, to the largest number of adherents, the greatest wealth, most learning, or highest favor with the world,' nor ask 'whose modes of worship are most pleasing to the popular taste, or whose forms of government is most consonant with the civil institutions of any particular country, or may happen to be in favor at any particular age.' But we shall ask 'which adopts in largest number and in greatest purity and which proclaims most earnestly and fully, those great doctrines which were hidden from the world until unfolded in Christ Jesus, and which as they are now more and more widely unfolded through the ministry of the Church, impart to the angels in heaven new and more enrapturing views of God's manifest glory.' Other tests of a true Church, other criteria of the best Church, there may be. They must be such, however, as shall neither contravene, supersede, nor ignore this the primary design, the highest office, and most glorious achievement of the Church.

It is well all who are permitted to cherish the hope that they have been admitted to a place, however humble it may be, in God's own, the true Church, to reflect on the dignity of the body and the work with which they were associated. It is a low conception they have formed of the Church, who regard it merely as a place of safety for their own souls. It is a defective view to regard it as merely an agency appointed of God for gathering others into the fold that their souls may be saved. The Church is, indeed, presented in the word of

God in these aspects, but it has a higher end, as we have seen, than either or both and by holding it up before our mind in that broader, grander and more glorious aspect, we shall be the more deeply moved by the amazing grace of God which has admitted us to a place within such a body and to a participation in such a work. However faint may be the resemblance of the Church in the present forms in which it is actually presented to our view, to our conception of what the Church ought to be, having its origin and the mission here claimed for it, it is, nevertheless, the medium through which God instructs the highest order of intelligences in heaven in the mysteries of infinite wisdom. There is no honor the world can offer, to be compared to that of being so much as a door-keeper of this house of God; this school where angels, and the chief of them, the Gabriels and Michaels, are the learners. The Church in the days of the apostle was far from realizing his conceptions of what it ought to be, yet he is never found undervaluing its office, and never ceased to be amazed that he should be called to a share either in its reproaches, sufferings and persecutions, or its work, honors and salvation.

There are those of us who not only cherish the hope that we have been admitted to a participation in the privileges of the Church, but the hope also that we have been called by the providence and grace of God to discharge special functions there, to exercise authority, to dispense blessings, some bearing rule specifically, and others adding to this the ministry of the word and ordinances. If we are not in error as to our vocation in Christ Jesus, how great the honor conferred upon us. How great that honor would have been, had the Church and our relations to it, no other office except to serve the present and future welfare of our fellow men. How great, inconceivably, oppressively great that honor becomes when the office is contemplated in the light in which the apostle beheld it: the agency chosen of God and ordained from eternity for the manifestation of His otherwise hidden and inscrutable wisdom, to the most exalted beings His hands have ever formed, or His beneficence endowed. And yet, perhaps, we sometimes feel the work to which we are called in the Church a burden to us. We sometimes speak of the sacrifices which it demands of us. We sometimes look with a coveting eye upon the ease others not employed in this work enjoy, the distinctions and wealth they have acquired, and which might have been our lot also, but for the restraints and attractions of our position in the Church! Shame to us that such a feeling ever comes over our hearts! Shame to us that we ever shrink from any duty, labor, self-denial or danger in this heavenly service! Shame to us that any earthly allurements should have the power to turn us aside for a moment from this divine work!

The honor is great, but what shall I say of the responsibility of standing foremost in the operations of that agency by which all men are to be enlightened in the economy of redemption and angels taught the manifold wisdom of God? This is not simply great—it is appalling. Such a mission to be in charge of frail, sinful men, each one of whom feels in his inmost soul that if he may call himself a saint at all, he is less than the least of all who may bear the name, and such momentous consequences involved in his fidelity and success

—“who is sufficient for these things?” “Who would undertake them but for the necessity which is laid on him, and for the woe that impends over him? Who could sustain the burden put on the appointment of God—itsself one of the mysteries of redemption evincing His manifold wisdom—by which the foolish things of the world and weak things and base things, things which are despised and things which are not, are employed as His instruments in abasing human pride, and establishing His own glory?”

Then, also, the encouragement to labor in the work of building up and enlarging the Church, supplied in the view which the subject on hand presents of its history and office. Its history beginning in the eternal purpose of God, assures us that it can never fail of its design. God himself may as soon cease to be, as any eternal purpose of His fall short of its object. The design of the Church not failing, no labor put forth in its service, shall be in vain. Its office so sublime and important, gives dignity to all that is done for its furtherance. Is that soul capable of an upward aspiration which is not lifted out of its sluggishness, its despondency and doubts, when it can feel that any cause in which it is engaged is truly noble in its own nature, and far-reaching and enduring in its results? Here is a cause, the noblest that ever enlisted the co-operation of any of God's creatures—than which God could not Himself be employed in a nobler: a cause that spans eternity from boundary to boundary, and encircles heaven and earth in its embrace.

The apostle felt the power of his own view of these things in sustaining him under all his trials and he sought to impart that influence to his brethren of Ephesus. Wherefore, says he to them, after using the words of the text, Wherefore, seeing that such are the relations of the Church and of my ministry in the Church, to the eternal purpose of God, the illumination of the world in the economy of the hidden mystery, and the instruction of the heavenly princes and potentates in the manifold wisdom of God, “I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you which is your glory.” This apostle often speaks of his tribulations, but they are always and only those which sprang from his work on behalf of the Church. Having such an origin he gloried in them. He here calls upon his brethren to glory in them with him, for they were an honor to him and to them. He did not faint under them, nor ought they. He would endure a thousand fold greater, if it were possible, in the same cause, and neither faint nor complain.

I have thought that the subject, in its several aspects as now presented, might not be inappropriate to the capacity in which we are assembled, and to the circumstances which attend our meeting this day. We are here convened as a court of the Church of Jesus Christ. We claim to be, through His favor, an integral part of that Church to which such a sublime origin and such a work are assigned in the text. We constitute in our organized form, the highest judicatory of that portion of the Church general which we represent, the highest in dignity, authority and influence. We ought to discharge the functions here appertaining to us, under the full impression of these considerations; we ought to magnify our office; we ought to feel its inspiration; we are a

spectacle unto men and angels, for both have a personal interest in what we shall here do.

Our circumstances also are most solemn. We are yet in the first stage of a great change in our condition. Not two years have elapsed since, by the force of events we had no power to control, our separation from the body of which we had formed a component part, became a matter of necessity. If there has been in the case, a schism, a rending of the body of Christ, we hold ourselves guiltless of it, we have never fomented discord, walked disorderly, troubled Israel, nor broken our covenants. Our record to this is on the earth and in heaven also.

Now, however, we find ourselves an independent body, having no formal connection with any other, acknowledging no superior under Christ Jesus, and enjoying little or no favor from any portion of the Christian world, except from that comprised in the territory we also cover, whose condition strongly resembles our own.

A vast work is before us. Without overlooking or disparaging our obligations to bear our part in sending the Gospel to all the nations of the earth, let me confine my view to that which lies at our own door, and under our eyes.

Perhaps a work wider in dimensions and attended with more difficulties, has not since the days of the apostles and their immediate successors, been set apart in the Providence of God and specially assigned to a definite section of the Church, than that now devolving on us jointly with our sister denominations in our Confederacy. The Providence which has allotted this work to us, has thrown barriers around us and around it, which excludes us from foreign aid. This Providence tells us that we need not expect it—that we are not at liberty even to desire it. For two centuries that same Providence has been accumulating the materials on this Southern soil as if to form a task of over powering magnitude, and now suddenly rolls the entire mass upon us, unsustained by the prayers, uncheered by the sympathies of those even who once, and but recently declared themselves happy in being permitted to embrace us as brethren in Christ.

What are our resources for the work thus allotted to us by a Providence so clear we cannot mistake it, and so authoritative we dare not disregard it? Most inadequate did they seem, when we were fully aroused by the breaking up of old associations and habits, to an apprehension of our true condition and peculiar responsibilities. Most inadequate then; for we had exercised no special economy over them, but, although the most needy, and that without any special agency or neglect of our own, the most needy of all, we had lent ourselves freely to those general appliances and efforts which were designed to operate on the then one country at large, not careful to exact our full proportion of their benefactions, and seeming to forget that our largest and most pressing needs were just such as could not be supplied, in any part, by such national enterprises. Yet we had and could retain our ministers, our Church organizations and buildings, in number, perhaps one fourth of what the room for our operations in the existing condition of our country, admitted; our institutions of learning and our religious journals, ample in number, but none of these adequately sustained. We had, in a word, those

appurtenances of a Church according to the demands of the present age, which were so rooted into the soil that neither by any liberality of our own nor the encroachments of others, could they well be alienated from us. With this, however, and a strong faith in God, we accepted without complaint, the necessity which cast us upon our own resources, and began with buoyant hearts to address ourselves to the work of the future. Read again the proceedings of the first Assembly, held not eighteen months since, and mark the vigor, calmness, providence and hopefulness which characterize them all. It seemed, indeed, that our troubles were over, or nearly so.

But such was not the will of our Lord in heaven. We had not been sufficiently chastened. Limited as we deemed our resources, they were too great for the work—too great for such an accomplishment of the work as should make manifest the glory of God in the means as well as in the result. Darkness began soon to gather over our heads. Our enemies—and they have shown themselves enemies of the Church no less than of the State—encircled us with a belt of fire and blood, and for months, without check, did they contract its compass day by day. Our ministers, some were cast into prison, some sent off into distant exile, some slain in battle, some compelled, in order to escape from violence or dishonor, to flee from their homes into the interior of the country. Our churches were dispersed, the ordinances of the Gospel suspended, and our houses of worship desecrated, despoiled, converted into hospitals and barracks, or laid waste with fire; so with our seminaries of learning. Two of the four grand agencies of the Church as constituted by the General Assembly, having just entered upon their work, were cut short in their career, and all their plans overthrown. In the midst of such disasters, whilst they were yet fresh to our hearts, and were still falling thick and crushing upon our hopes, the second Assembly convened. It was a small body; the calamities of the day rendered it small; the rebukes of our Heavenly Father were so sore upon our country and our Zion, our souls had strength for little else except to cry unto Him for forgiveness and deliverance.

We meet to-day in our third Assembly. The darkness around us is not so dense as at the last. We have occasion for fervent gratitude to God, that our enemies have, for the last half year and more, made but slight additional encroachments upon our territory; and for many, many, most signal interpositions of His providence in our behalf. But our dangers are not over. The judgments of God still press heavily upon us. The evils previously inflicted are not repaired, and long must it be before they can be all repaired. Some of our brethren of the ministry are still in exile; our dispersed Churches are not re-gathered; many of our people are wandering yet as sheep without a shepherd; our schools, colleges, and theological seminaries, where not extinct, are doing little more than maintaining a spark to be kindled again at a future day; meanwhile our youth who ought to be thronging their walls, and to whom we must look for a supply of ministers in time to come, are, in large numbers, exposed to the dangers of the battlefield, the pestilence of the camp, and the vices of military life; and others, in the general disorganization of society which prevails through-

out the land, are permitting the season appropriate to the pursuit of an education to run to waste. Other interests of the Church are suffering in like manner. What furnishes occasion for special alarm—would that it also might prove the occasion of repentance and humiliation before God, on the part of both ministers and people—the ordinances of the Gospel in most of our churches seem deprived of their usual efficacy. The spirit of God is not among them in his wonted power. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many has waxed cold. The accessions to the Church are few; not sufficient, it is feared, even in point of mere numbers, to supply the places of those who have fallen victims to the casualties of the war, whilst we have been thus cruelly robbed of private members and officers whose loss to us mere numbers can never supply, a loss to us and to every interest of the country which we have no arithmetic for estimating.

But in addition to these calamities and tokens of decline which are attributable directly to our civil troubles, there is another form of affliction that has no reference to that source of evil, but in which God has spoken to us face to face. The past has been a year of fearful mortality in the ranks of our ministry. I speak of such as have been removed by causes that always exist. The number I know not; I know that for the entire number on our register, it is unusually large. But not the number merely but the men! Do they not seem to have been just those whom we most needed, whom we could least spare, in the pressing exigencies of our condition? I shall not be suspected of overlooking the merits of other brethren beloved in the Lord, highly favored in their gifts and usefulness, and whose memories shall long be held in grateful veneration, if I mention two or three names. And, first, in the order of events, a name so dear to many who hear me, and so honored throughout our Church and country, that of Dr. J. H. Thornwell. And in mentioning it, I trust no one suspects me of the folly of designing any eulogium upon it. I mean only to say that more than any man, he impressed his views upon the policy of the Church as this was prescribed in our first Assembly, and that our eyes and hopes were turned to him more than to any other, to guide in their future operations, the measures to which he had been so influential in giving the original shape and direction. It was not simply that from his acknowledged ability and his position, the loss of no other man might have been so heavy a bereavement; it was also that his loss at no other time would have been felt as so crushing a calamity. It was not merely that his name, already spread to distant lands and destined to a wider sphere and richer lustre from the consummation of projected labors of enduring value to the whole Church, would have given our infant Church, with which he was so thoroughly identified, a name also in the world, and a reputation and an influence; but it was that we so much needed his wisdom, his influence, his fervour, his power in the actual work, of the day and amongst ourselves.

We had not recovered from the blow which prostrated so many of our fond hopes, in the death of a Thornwell, when it was announced to us that another of the lights of our Church had been extinguished. I allude to Dr. C. C. Jones, the pioneer in the work of systematic religious instruction of our slave population, the work which has been al-

ready referred to as constituting a chief part and the most difficult part, of the special mission of the Southern Church. However marked the honor to which he is entitled for his labors in the several high positions to which he was called by the Church, it was in his association with this work, his thorough knowledge of its details, his experience of its difficulties, his convictions of its importance, his zeal for its success, we felt so deeply our dependence on him for instruction, and looked so confidently to him to arouse and encourage us in its prosecution. Oh, it was a mysterious dispensation of Providence, that took him from us at this time! I know it was done in the manifold wisdom of God, but the discovery of that wisdom—it is for the angels to make.

Nor can I resist the temptation to speak in this connection, of another whose name has within a few days been added to the roll of our honored dead; one not so widely known by personal acquaintance as those already mentioned, but not less tenderly cherished of all who ever came in contact with his pure, gentle, guileless spirit—the John among the disciples of our Lord; so modest so self-sacrificing, so beautiful an example, in his social life, of the lovely traits of the Gospel, and, in his public ministrations, so rare a model of a Christian pastor according to the standard of the saintly Herbert, or the rule of the inspired Paul: all the members of his own Synod now present, and many others know that I must allude to the beloved McBryde. Who that ever knew him, but has felt that it would have been a loss for life, not to have known him. In these days when there is so much assailing our eyes and ears, so much thrusting itself into our very souls to engender feelings of anger, indignation, wrath and resentment, against our enemies from without and from within, against foreign and domestic oppressors, who would not feel the worth to himself, to society and to the Church, of a living embodiment and exemplification of the sermon on the Mount, or the 12th of Romans? Such was he, if ever we have known one such. His loss at any time would have been a sad bereavement. As of Thornwell and Jones, whose sanctified spirits his has now joined in the good world on high, so I say of McBryde, removed in the midst of his days, and of his usefulness, that he was taken from us when our need is the sorest.

I have dwelt too long, I am well aware—on our tribulations of these varied kinds. But my purpose in so doing can scarcely have escaped any of you. It has been to lead your minds, under the pressure of a profound consciousness that nothing else will minister the encouragement you need, to the source of consolations and renewed hope from which the apostle derived his fortitude and zeal. The Church whose afflictions are our afflictions, is God's Church. Its mission was prescribed in His eternal purposes. Its officers are such that the principalities and powers in Heaven, would suffer a loss if its mission should fail. Its very trials are made to work together under the direction of His manifold wisdom, for the accomplishment of its exalted ends. Its losses often prove its surest gain. If those who have been endowed with special gifts for carrying forward its enterprises are stricken down in the vigor of their days, He can raise up others in their stead, and He will raise them up, a score for every one, if need be.

It is ours to be humbled under such chastisements at our Heavenly Father's hand; humbled most of all that we required them to arouse us to our duty. But it is ours, also, to put forth energies

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